

## *Orphans and School Vulnerabilities in Selected States in Nigeria*

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### **Abstract**

This study investigated the issues that relate with schooling of orphans in Nigeria. The descriptive survey research was undertaken in Lagos, Osun, Akwa Ibom, and Abuja. Sampling was done in multi-stages. A validated questionnaire was administered to collect data using Open Data Kit (ODK). Orphans aged 10-17 years, resident in orphanages and family settings, participated in the study. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. Results showed that about 240 orphans in family settings and 48 in orphanages are not in school. It was also discovered that 625 orphans in family settings and 680 in orphanages did not complete their primary school education. Furthermore, orphans in family settings 824 and 576 in orphanages did not attend secondary schools. So also 790 in family settings and 496 in orphanages did not complete their secondary school education. It was noted that about 499 orphans in family settings and 72 in orphanages occasionally miss school and the reasons given were house chores, economic activity such as hawking, labour work, sickness, lack of learning materials and non-payment of school fees. In addition, some of the orphans in family settings (315) and 146 in orphanages are not happy with their performance in school and 223 in family setting and 109 in orphanages believe they are below average in class. It was therefore recommended that government, development partners and various organisations should come up with aids and intervention programmes that can assist orphans' schooling irrespective of residential placement.

Keywords: Orphans, Schooling, Enrolment, Challenges, Orphanages

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## Introduction

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with over 206.1 million people as at 2020 and it is about 2.64% of the world's population. Nigeria also has a young population structure, with children and young people under the age of 25 years constituting more than 60% of the population and among this population are the orphans. As indicated in the Nigerian National Population Commission (NPC) 2004 documentation, the 2003 Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) showed that 6 percent of children under the age of 15 had lost at least one parent while less than 1 percent of children had lost both parents. The prevalence of orphan-hood was highest in the South East where 11% of children had lost one or both parents. The provisional findings of the 2007 Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) similarly reported that 6.1% of males and 6.5% of females under the age of 15 years and 10.5% of males and 10.7% of females under the age of 18 years were orphans in Nigeria. In 2007, 6.1% of male orphans and 6.5% of female orphans were recorded as not living with any biological parent. In 2010, the population of orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria was estimated at 17.5 million (USAID, 2010). Not long after this time, series of clashes and wars were experienced in different parts of the country - militants' clashes in the Niger-Delta region, insurgency in most of the North-eastern states and Fulani herdsmen/farmer clashes in the North Central. All these crises no doubt keep the population of the orphans increasing in the country.

In most countries today, full-time schooling is compulsory for all children up to a certain age. The Nigerian educational system for children under the age of 18 years is implemented both at the basic and senior secondary education levels. The basic education component as defined in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) comprised early childhood education, primary education, junior secondary education and non-formal education. The National Policy on Education (2004) encapsulates Nigeria's philosophy of education, which is based on the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system. The policy mandates compulsory, free basic education (nine years of schooling, comprising six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary school education) which is backed up by the Universal Basic Education Act, 2004 (UBE Act). The Act is Federal Government's intervention to provide assistance to states and local governments in Nigeria for the purposes of uniform and qualitative basic education through equitable access to education.

Many studies have focused on impact of parent/s death on education of orphans. While a study observed the likelihood of orphans to suffer low enrolment in schools and low completion rates (*Case, Paxson, and Ableidinger 2004*) other studies discovered no impact of parental death on education of orphan (Ainsworth, Beegle, and Koda 2005; Kamali et al. 1996; Lloyd and Blanc 1996; Ryder et al. 1994). Orphans' accessibility to education is of utmost concern because when children, especially orphans are left vulnerable, they are at risk of abuse, criminal vices and violent behaviour. Education has major impact on behaviour and there is an increased recognition of the role of education in human development and national growth. It is expected that if orphans are educated they are less likely to contribute to the economic burden of the nation. Not only that, the education acquired will equip them with skills to contribute positively to the growth and development of the country. Based on all the above narratives, it is expedient to find out the challenges associated with the schooling of orphans in Nigeria. The information

obtained from this research will provide data for guiding the reform of orphan's welfare and their protection. It will also guide policies and programmes towards the Nigeria's commitment to achieving the SDG goals by 2030 in ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education.

Therefore in this study two objectives were developed which are to:

1. identify the issues related to schooling of orphans in family settings and orphanages in Nigeria
2. analyse the barriers/challenges to effective schooling of orphans both in family settings and orphanages in Nigeria

In order to explore these further, the following research questions were generated:

1. Do orphans in family settings and orphanages go to school?
2. How many of the orphans that attended school completed their basic education?
3. What are the risk factors to orphans' drop out and in-completion of basic education in family settings and orphanages?

The study employed descriptive survey research design. The target population comprised orphans in formal settings (orphanages) and informal care (family settings) in selected states in Nigeria. The sampling was undertaken in multi stages. At the first stage, 4 states were selected purposively using indices of insurgencies, HIV/AIDs and tribal clashes as basis for selection. The chosen states are Lagos, Osun, Akwa Ibom, and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. At the second stage, two Local Government Areas (LGA) that have orphanages were purposively chosen, the list of orphanages in each state was collected from the state ministry in charge of orphanages. In each orphanage chosen, orphans between ages, 10-17 years participated in the study. At the family settings, snowball sampling technique was adopted in selecting the orphans. Only orphans who met the criteria for inclusion and who agreed to participate in the study were involved. To capture the detailed experiences of the orphans in the family setting, handheld electronic devices with the open data kit (ODK) installed on it were used. This approach minimised errors in data collection and entry. It also helped in collecting Geographical Positioning System (GPS) information which served as part of the quality assurance and also provide spatial data for geo-referencing of findings. Questionnaires for collection of quantitative data was designed, pre-tested and validated for use. Research assistants were trained and commissioned for data collection. Data collected were analysed using item by item percentages.

Research Question 1: Do orphans in orphanages and family settings go to school? The results are presented in the table 1 below:

Table 1: Showing Primary and Secondary School Orphans' School Attendance

	Family Settings				Orphanages			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
Are you presently in school?	1596	86.9	240	13.1	1291	96.4	48	3.6
Did (do) you attend primary school?	1770	96.4	66	3.6	1298	96.9	41	3.1
Did (do) you attend secondary school?	946	53.4	824	46.6	723	55.7	576	44.3

Source: Field Data and Report 2021

The results above showed that most orphans in family settings and orphanages are in school, (Family settings 1596 and Orphanages 1291) however there are still about (240 in family settings and 48 in orphanages) who are not in school. Most of the orphans in family settings 1770 and orphanages 1298 attended primary schools. However in the family settings, 66 did not attend primary school and 41 did not attend in orphanages. It was discovered that in family settings 1145 completed primary schools and 618 also completed in the orphanages. 625 did not complete their primary education in family settings while 680 did not complete theirs in orphanages. Furthermore, orphans in family settings 946 and 723 in orphanages attend secondary school. 824 in family settings and 576 in orphanages did not attend secondary schools.

Research Question 2: How many of the orphans completed their basic education?

The results are presented in table 2 below

Table 2: Showing Completion of Primary and Secondary School by Orphans

	Family Settings				Orphanages			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%
Did you complete your primary education?	1145	64.7	625	35.3	618	47.6	680	52.4
Did (do) you complete your secondary education?	156	16.5	790	83.5	80	13.9	496	86.1

Source: Field Data and Report 2021

The above results showed that 625 orphans in family settings and 680 orphans in orphanages did not complete their primary school education. In addition, 790 orphans in family settings and 496 in orphanages did not complete their secondary school education.

Research Question 3: what are the vulnerability factors for orphans' completion of basic education in family settings and orphanages?

The results are presented in Tables 3 – 9.

Table 3: Showing Orphans Satisfaction with Performance at School

<b>Are you happy with your performance in school?</b>							
Family Settings				Orphanages			
Yes		No		Yes		No	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1281	80.3	315	19.7	1152	88.8	146	11.2
<b>Rate your performance in relation to your class mates</b>							
Family Settings				Orphanages			
	n	%		N	%		
Above average	532	33.3		520	40.1		
Average student	841	52.7		669	51.5		
Below average student	223	14		109	8.4		

Source: Field Data and Report 2021

Most of the orphans in family settings (315) are not happy with their performance in school and 223 believe they are below average in class. In the orphanages, 146 orphans are not happy with their performance and 109 believed they perform below average in class. Most of the orphans are satisfied with their performance in school however 19.7 % in family settings and 11.2% in orphanages are not. Also 14% in Family settings and 8.4% in orphanages rated themselves below average in relation to their classmates.

Table 4: Orphans Experience with Living with Caregivers

Do you think living with your caregiver is affecting your performance in school?	Family settings				Orphanages			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	512	32.1	1084	67.9	378	29.1	920	70.9
If yes, in what direction?	Positive		Negative		Positive		Negative	
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%
	327	63.9	185	36.1	340	89.9	38	10.1
If negative, in what way?	Yes (n)		%		No (n)		%	
1. Often get late to school	44		23.8		4		10.3	
2. Sometimes miss school	31		16.8		5		12.8	
3. Not being able to complete assignment	14		7.6		11		28.2	
4. Poor performances in exams	45		24.3		16		41	
5. Unable to pay school fees	51		27.6		3		7.7	

Source: Field Data and Report 2021

The results above indicated that most orphans believed that living with their caregivers is not affecting their performance in school. It was noted that many of the orphans in family settings (1084) did not feel living with their caregivers affected their performance in school so also 920 in orphanages. However 512 orphans in family settings and 378 in orphanages believed living with their caregiver affected their performance in school and 185 in family settings and 38 in orphanages feel it is in the negative direction. Also 36.1% and 10.1% of the orphans in family settings and orphanages respectively feel that living with their caregivers have affected them negatively, such that they often get late to school, sometimes miss school, not being able to complete assignments, poor performances in exams and being unable to pay their school fees.

Table 5: Orphans' Accessibility to Time to Study

Do you get enough time to study at home after school?	Family settings				Orphanages			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	1252	78.7	339	21.3	1210	94.1	76	5.9
If no why?	Family settings				Orphanages			
	Yes (n)		%		Yes (n)		%	
1. House chores	144		42.5		41		54	
2. Economic activity such as hawking, labour work, etc	125		36.9		3		4	
3. Power outage	13		3.8		7		9.2	
4. Lack of learning materials	46		13.6		10		13.2	
5. Others, specify	11		3.2		15		19.7	

Source: Field Data and Report 2021

Results from table 5 above showed that most orphans do get enough time at home to study, however those who do not were hindered because they had to do house chores and economic activity such as hawking and labour work. Some of them were also hindered by power outage and lack of learning materials. It was noted that 76 orphans in orphanages and 337 in family settings do not get enough time to study at home after school. This is due to issues such as house chores, economic activity such as hawking, labour work, power outage and lack of learning materials.

Table 6: Orphans' Experience with School Assignment

Do you always do your school assignments alone?	Family settings				Orphanages			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	1087	68.1	509	31.9	784	60.4	514	39.6
	Family settings				Orphanages			
If no, from whom do you seek assistance?	N		%		n		%	
Neighbours	88		17.3		3		0.6	
Class mates	72		14.2		32		6.2	
Other members of the household	258		50.7		295		57.4	
Home teacher	18		3.5		52		10.1	
Caregivers	72		14.2		128		24.9	
Others	1		0.1		4		0.8	

Source: Field Data and Report 2021

From the results, it was revealed that most of the orphans 1087 in family settings and 784 in orphanages do their school assignments alone and without assistance. The challenge was more for orphans in family settings than orphans in orphanages. However 31.9% and 39.6% in family settings and orphanages respectively do not do school assignments alone. They were able to get assistance from neighbours, class mates, other members of the household, home teacher and caregivers.



Table 7: Orphans' Challenge with Getting to School Early

Do you sometimes get late to school	Family settings				Orphanages			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	624	39.1	972	60.1	300	23.1	998	76.9
	Family settings				Orphanages			
If yes, how often does this happen?	n		%		n		%	
Very often	84		13.5		19		6.3	
Occasionally	323		51.8		117		39	
Rarely	214		34.3		160		53.3	
Never	3		0.5		4		1.3	
Why do you get late to school?	Family settings				Orphanages			
1. House chores	295		47.3		125		41.7	
2. Economic activity such as hawking, labour work	76		12.2		5		1.7	
3. Waking up late	192		30.8		87		29	
4. Lack of learning materials	12		1.9		1		0.3	
5. Other, Specify	49		7.9		82		27.3	

Source: Field Data and Report 2021

Results from table 7: showed that orphans sometimes get late to school due to house chores, economic activities, waking up late and learning materials

Table 8: Orphans' Challenge with Having to Miss School

Do you sometimes miss school?	Family settings				Orphanages			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	499	31.3	1097	68.7	231	17.8	1067	82.2
	Family settings				Orphanages			
If yes, how often does this happen in a term?								
1. Very often	43	8.6	6	2.6				
2. Occasionally	230	46.1	72	31.2				
3. Rarely	223	44.7	152	65.8				
4. Never	3	0.6	1	0.4				
5. Why do you miss school?								
6. House chores	165		41					
7. Economic activity such as hawking, labour work	95		4					
8. Sickness	225		149					
9. Lack of learning materials	80		6					
10. Non-payment of school fees	154		9					
11. School bullying	2		2					
12. Stigmatization by school mates	3		0					
13. Shame of being an orphan	5		0					
14. Exclusion from school activities	10		5					
15. Other, Specify	41		49					

Source: Field Data and Report 2021

Results above showed that some orphans miss school for various reasons among which are sickness, non-payment of school fees, economic activity such as hawking, labour work and house chores. However economic activity and house chores are more in family settings than orphanages. It was noted that about 499 orphans in family settings occasionally miss school and the reasons given were due to house chores, economic activity such as hawking, labour work, sickness, lack of learning materials and non-payment of school fees. So also in orphanages, about 72 orphans occasionally miss school and those who have ever missed school do so because they were sick 149 and because of house chores 41.

Table 9: Stakeholders Involvement with Orphans' Care

	Family Settings		Orphanages	
	Number (n)	%	Number (n)	%
Who pays your school fees? (for those attending school)				
1. Self	14	0.9	0	0.0
2. Caregiver	979	61.3	985	75.9
3. Neighbour	3	0.2	-	-
4. NGOs/CBOs/FBOs	10	0.6	172	12.7
5. Government	103	6.5	60	4.6
6. Philanthropists	13	0.8	60	4.6
7. Other family members	78	4.9	7	0.5
8. Others Specify	396	24.8	-	-
Who pays for other school materials? (e.g. books, pen, school uniforms, shoes etc.)				
1. Self	32		1	0.1
2. Caregiver	1069		1008	77.7
3. Neighbour	13		1	0.1
4. NGOs/CBOs/FBOs	13		162	12.5
5. Government	44		46	3.5
6. Philanthropists	18		61	4.7
7. Other family members	80		6	0.5
8. Others Specify	446		13	1

Source: Field Data and Report 2021

The result above showed that in the family settings it is the caregiver who pays orphans' school fees 979 while 103 of the orphans have their school fees paid by Government. So also in orphanages it is the caregiver who pays the school fees of 985 orphans, non-Governmental organisations/Community Based Organisations/Faith Based Organisations pays for 172 while 60 of the orphans said their school fees is being paid by the government and Philanthropists.

## **Conclusion**

It is well known that the extent to which the basic needs of children are met especially at their developmental stage plays significant roles in their quality of life. When children are deprived the basic needs, there are tendencies for vulnerabilities. The results of this study has shown that whether family settings or orphanages, there is failure in the ability of families or orphanages to meet some of the needs of some of the orphans in their care. This may be due to poverty, increase in population of orphans and reduced number of care givers in the settings investigated. As reported, orphans and vulnerable children are finding it increasingly difficult to be incorporated into the extended family safety net (Foster, 2010) and these children are more prone to ill health than children in more secure circumstances, they have less access to health care and miss meals more frequently and are more likely to skip school or not go to school at all (Tagurum, Childan, Bello, Afolaranmi, Hassan, Iyaji & Idoko, 2015). The ability of these children to continue in school would largely depend on households' resources and the public support for education (Bhargava & Bigombe, 2003).

It was therefore recommended that irrespective of residential placement, government, development partners and various organisations should come up with more aids and intervention programmes for the minority orphans that are yet to secure quality schooling and resources. This is necessary so as to reduce some of the challenges faced.

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